



MASTER FILE

October 12, 2000

DSSD CENSUS 2000 PROCEDURES AND OPERATIONS MEMORANDUM SERIES #M-7

MEMORANDUM FOR Brian Monaghan
 Lead Assistant Division Chief for Censuses
 Field Division

Attention: Management Training Branch
 Field Division

From: Howard Hogan *Howard Hogan*
 Chief, Decennial Statistical Studies Division

Prepared by: Rebecca I. Piegari
 Mathematical Statistician, Decennial Statistical Studies Division

Subject: Trip Report to Billings, Montana for List/Enumerate Observation

I. INTRODUCTION

I had the opportunity to go to the Billings Local Census Office (LCO), which is under the jurisdiction of the Denver, CO Regional Census Center (RCC), between the dates of March 27 and 31, 2000 to observe the List/Enumerate (L/E) operation. The L/E operation is conducted from March 13 through May 1. I was particularly interested in the Quality Assurance (QA) procedures and the challenges associated with the L/E operation. I spent several days in the LCO observing the Reinterview program, as well as several days in the field observing the dependent QA.

During the L/E operation, enumerators canvass each Assignment Area (AA) looking for housing units (HUs). For each HU that is identified, the enumerator records the address/location in the listing lines of the Address Register (AR), map spots the unit on the appropriate map sheet, and completes an Enumerator Questionnaire (EQ) for the unit by interviewing a knowledgeable respondent.

II. BILLINGS LCO

This LCO contains primarily List/Enumerate (L/E), Update/Enumerate (U/E), and Update/Leave (U/L). There is also some Mailout/Mailback. This is contrary to the majority of LCOs which contain primarily Mailout/Mailback and U/L, and only some L/E or U/E. The Billings LCO has a lot of space, and they are far from overcrowded. Therefore, they are able to maintain a neatly organized system.

II. REINTERVIEW

On Monday, March 27, the LCO had not selected any reinterview cases yet, because the D-908, Administrative Reinterview Trouble Report was just run for the first time that morning. Too few cases had been checked in the previous week to run the report. The LCO is planning to run two shifts of clerks: 3 clerks to work between 8:30 am and 3:00 p.m. and 3 clerks to work between 3:00 and 9:30 p.m. There will also be two transcription clerks who will only working during the daytime hours.

By Wednesday, March 29, enumerators' cases had been selected for Administrative Reinterview based on the D-908. I was able to observe the transcription process and listen to some telephone reinterviews. The Personal Visit (PV) Enumerators (reinterviewers) had not yet been trained.

While observing the transcription process, I noticed that the majority of the Enumerator Questionnaires (EQs) did not have addresses. This was a big concern to the telephone clerks because they were instructed to ask the respondent if they had reached the correct address. Without the address, the clerks did not know what to say. The OOS was going to address this issue with the AMFO to correct the situation in the future. The lack of addresses would not impact the PV enumerators because they take the Address Register with them into the field to locate the units. Therefore they have the address of the unit available.

The telephone clerks were confused about how to handle vacant proxy cases because no address was provided, and the possibility exists that a proxy might have provided information for more than just one unit. The OOS decided that all vacant proxy cases without an address would go to personal visit (PV) instead of telephone reinterview. During the weekly telephone conference with the Denver RCC, the Regional Tech also stated that all vacant proxy cases must go to personal visit. The Regional Tech additionally instructed the LCOs that the verification of the vacant proxys must be by a different proxy. This procedure is not consistent with specifications for this operation as outlined in DSSD Census 2000 Procedures and Operations Memorandum Series # II-9R.

III. DEPENDENT QA

I had the opportunity to spend several days in the field with the L/E Field Operations Supervisor (FOS) observing the dependent listing check. The FOS was conducting some of the dependent listing checks because the Crew Leaders (CLs) and assistants were too busy with production. The CL had already chosen the random starts for the Address Register before we arrived. The first random start was a block with no living quarters, which according to the manual, needed to be canvassed in entirety or until 30 miles were checked. All of the roads for this block were marked VE TR (vehicular trail) on the block map. This block happened to place us in a rancher's field. The roads that we canvassed looked like they had been used on occasion when the rancher might have had

cattle in that particular field. At times the trail completely disappeared because it was completely overgrown with grass. The FOS did not follow the 30 mile rule as stated in the manuals because he felt that it did not provide an adequate assessment of the enumerator's work. The second random start was at a housing unit. The FOS checked the map spot and address and then reviewed the next two housing units. We traveled approximately 150 miles during the dependent check.

The second dependent listing check that I observed was in a different Crew Leader District (CLD). The CL that I observed indicated that she was not going to actually conduct the listing check yet. She wanted to drive around part of the Assignment Area (AA) to see if the enumerator had done a good job. We identified one trailer that was not listed in the AR, and a little further down the road, we found a housing unit that might have also been in the AA. It was difficult to tell from the map where the boundary of the AA was. The CL decided that she would send her assistant out the next day to recanvass the AA and correct errors, then she would conduct the actual dependent listing check. The CL was also going to have the assistant speak with the enumerator about the errors identified. We traveled approximately 140 miles during the review.

V. GENERAL COMMENTS

The Supplemental Reinterview is not described in enough detail in the training materials. The OOS was confused about when it was to be used and how many cases to select. The OOS was also confused about whether he was responsible for determining the "out of tolerance" on the D-908 or if that is what was being provided to him.

The LCO manager expressed concern that the dependent listing check was slowing the operation down. However, when I observed the listing check, it appeared to me to be completed in a timely manner. The greatest delay was in returning the completed dependent QA form and the Address Register to the LCO, which was due to the lack of a courier service (such as Federal Express) in the area that the registers were completed. The Crew Leaders (CLs) had to get the registers from the Crew Leader Assistants (CLAs) and then turn them over to the FOS, who had to drive to the LCO. On average, this is approximately 350 miles. The size and remoteness of the LCO are definitely obstacles but the LCO staff appear to do a good job of overcoming these obstacles.

VI. CONCERNS

The Reinterview manual indicates that following transcription, Enumerator Questionnaires (EQs) should be returned to Check In using the Reinterview Routing Record which has the option "Check In (NPC)." However, completed EQs are to be shipped to the appropriate Data Capture Center (DCC). This was brought to my attention by the Office Operations Supervisor (OOS) for Reinterview as he was going over the process. The OOS also mentioned that the training materials had arrived late. The OOSs

were supposed to be trained on March 20, but the materials did not arrive until the afternoon of March 20. The trainer did not have time to prepare due to the lateness of the materials. So there is a lot of confusion, but it will likely subside once everyone becomes more familiar with his/her job responsibilities.

The telephone clerks continued to contact occupied units even though an address had not been provided on the EQ or reinterview questionnaire. The clerks had a script to follow but they altered the script when they had no address. This defeats part of the purpose of having an independent verification because the clerks were to ensure they had reached the correct respondent and address. If the respondent was correct but not the address, then either the wrong household was reinterviewed or the enumerator provided incorrect data. In all instances where an address was not provided, the cases should have gone to personal visits for reinterview.

The new procedure of having vacant proxies verified by a different proxy may have compromised the quality of the reinterview program. This procedure is not documented for the reinterviewers to refer back to, nor is it explained how to screen the proxy to determine if he or she is the original proxy.

The definition of a vehicular trail (VE TR) should be also modified or clarified. It should not include trails that are completely overgrown or trails that go through pasture lands. This seems to be equivalent to driving through a person's front yard, and is inefficient use of time and resources.

VII. CONTACTS

Any questions about this document can be directed to Rebecca Piegari at 301-457-2986.

cc:

DSSD Census 2000 Procedures and Operations Memorandum Series Distribution List

Rosamond Harris (FLD)

Shelley Walker (DMD)

Kevin Haley (DSSD)

Carrie Johanson “

Broderick Oliver “

Rebecca Piegari “

Susan Lavin (Denver Regional Director)